

BIENNIAL REPORT

OF THE

VISITING PHYSICIAN

TO THE

INSANE ASYLUM.

1876.



SALEM, OREGON:
MART. V. BROWN, STATE PRINTER.
1876.

REPORT

To His Excellency,

Hon. L. F. Grover,

Governor of the State of Oregon:

SIR:—In compliance to a custom established by usage, I have the honor to submit for your inspection, the following biennial report of the condition of the Asylum for the Insane in East Portland.

The statistical portion of the report is as follows:

Number of patients at the beginning of the term commencing September 1st, 1874:—

STATE PATIENTS.

Males	140
Females.....	53

PRIVATE PATIENTS.

Males	0
Females.....	2

Total.....	195
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NUMBER OF PATIENTS RECEIVED

For the two years ending on the 31st of August, 1876:—

STATE PATIENTS.

Males	89
Females	42

PRIVATE PATIENTS.

Males	8
Females	3
Total	142

ENTIRE NUMBER TREATED

For the two years ending on the 31st of August, 1876 :

STATE PATIENTS.

Males	226
Females	95

PRIVATE PATIENTS.

Males	8
Females	5
Total	337

DISCHARGED.

STATE PATIENTS.

Cured, males.....	31
Cured, females.....	18
Improved, males.....	10
Improved, females.....	11
Unimproved, males.....	3
Escaped, males.....	3
Died, males.....	25
Died, females.....	8

PRIVATE PATIENTS.

Cured, males.....	2
Cured, females.....	2
Improved, males.....	3
Improved, females.....	2

Total.....118

Number remaining in the Asylum on the 31st of August, 1876:

STATE PATIENTS.

Males	156
Females.....	58

PRIVATE PATIENTS.

Males	3
Females.....	1

Total213

The following is the number of patients received from each county, together with the population, according to the census of 1870, and showing the number of insane in proportion to the number of inhabitants:

Baker,	No. of insane, 5,	Population, 2,804,	One in 560.8
Benton,	" " 8,	" 4,584,	" 573.0
Clackamas,	" " 5,	" 5,993,	" 1198.6
Clatsop,	" " 7,	" 1,255,	" 179.3
Coos,	" " 6,	" 1,644,	" 274.0
Douglas,	" " 9,	" 6,066,	" 674.0
Grant,	" " 4,	" 2,252,	" 563.0
Jackson,	" " 18,	" 4,778,	" 265.4

Josephine,	No. insane,	7	Population,	1,214,	One in	173.4
Lane,	"	8,	"	6,426,	"	803.2
Linn,	"	13,	"	8,717,	"	670.5
Marion,	"	21,	"	9,966,	"	474.5
Multnomah,	"	66,	"	11,510,	"	174.4
Polk,	"	13,	"	4,700,	"	361.5
Umatilla,	"	3,	"	2,916,	"	972.0
Union,	"	3,	"	2,552,	"	850.7
Wasco,	"	5,	"	2,509,	"	501.8
Washington	"	6,	"	4,261,	"	710.1
Yamhill,	"	7,	"	5,012,	"	716.0

Taking the number of counties represented above, we have one insane person for every 416.6 persons; but if we take the entire population of the State (several counties are not represented in the above enumeration) we have one insane person for every 424.9 persons in the State.

In May, 1875, Edward Chamberlain, a farmer, owning a small piece of land among the hills of Washington county, was committed.

The history of the case is about as follows: He was first examined by two physicians and pronounced sane and discharged. The same parties who had the first complaint issued, a short time afterwards swore out another, and had him re-examined. One of the physicians who had pronounced him sane upon the first examination, now declared him insane, and this, with the testimony of another physician, secured his commitment to the Asylum.

He had hardly been received before word was sent me, that many persons in the country did not consider him insane. For my more thorough information, I sent and obtained copies of all the commitment papers, when the facts above enumerated, together with what seemed to me to be fatal irregularities, were discovered.

I had, in the meantime, most thoroughly examined Mr. Chamberlain, and Dr. J. C. Hawthorne and myself agreed that he was not insane, but of a highly nervous temperament. These facts I communicated to Mr. Chamberlain, who expressed a wish that if there were any doubts upon the subject, he might be furnished work and kept for a time. Thinking that perhaps in this way we could best satisfy his neighbors and friends, we consented, and he was set to work in the garden. He was treated in all respects as an ordinary patient, being kept under close observation for a week or two, when nothing having occurred to change our opinions as to his sanity, he was discharged, and we have not heard from him since.

While it is a rare thing for a sane person to be sent to an insane asylum, and where the result does more to prejudice the public mind against so valuable and necessary an institution, the greatest care should be exercised. One case of that kind will do more to influence the public mind against an asylum, than the result of many cures, where they owe their restoration to health to the good and scientific care of such institutions, the best place for the treatment of all cases of that diseased condition of the physical man, called insanity.

Admitting the possibility of such mistakes, it becomes our imperative duty to use the utmost care, calling to our aid all the means accessible.

Where two physicians—and I am now speaking of well read and regularly graduated physicians—differ, the County Judge should not commit a man without calling to his aid the best medical talent obtainable, and one who is above the influences of prejudice—a man who has the courage to say what he means, and means what he says. And

great care should be had in examining the patient and other witnesses.

It is a well established fact—perhaps not as fully recognized as it should be—that *insanity* is a DISEASE of the nervous centers, sometimes approaching slowly, at others rapidly, and all cases, as a general rule, tending sooner or later either to become chronic or lead to rapid death. The sooner this fact is recognized by the professional man, as well as by the public, so much the sooner will that injurious prejudice to insane asylums be removed.

Philanthropic humanity, as well as public economy, demands that all insane persons should be treated upon the first manifestation of that disease; for medical experience teaches that just in proportion to the time when proper treatment is commenced will be the proportion of cures. Dr. Thurman, a distinguished writer on the subject, states that if cases were treated within three months of the first attack, four-fifths would recover. But if twelve months elapsed, four-fifths were incurable, and so in proportion, as the time is longer or shorter.

He adds: "The importance of placing the patient under proper care at an early period of the disorder is not only apparent from a comparison of the results of treatment, but is equally inculcated by that aggravation of the disorder and increased difficulty of management, which are the nearly uniform results when persons attacked with insanity are detained at home, where they are surrounded by near relatives, or by servants, whose attempts to control them, which they naturally resist, generally prove either futile or injurious.

The friends of the patient are not always aware of these facts, but when they are, are too often reluctant to stamp

the case with the character, or, as some think, with the stigma of confirmed insanity.

It is believed, however, that more correct views, with respect to mental disorders, and such as cannot but prove advantageous to the patient, are gradually diffusing themselves in the public mind.

I have quoted the above to show that all cases of insanity should be brought to the notice of skilled medical men as soon and as promptly as any of the other severe disorders.

Owing to the general want of information as to the nature and curability of insanity, delay is the common rule, till often the period at which the most good could have been done is passed.

The prejudice against asylums should be removed, and in furtherance of that object it should be the effort of those having the disposal of that class of unfortunates, to see and know, that in all cases, those having the care of the insane possess the high characteristics of honor and humanity, with a thorough knowledge of that disease and adaptability to that specialty.

Nor should they be committed to the hands of unexperienced men, who often take them for the purpose of making money.

It is a well established fact in our profession that we cannot all become equally proficient in all its branches, making it necessary for each man, who hopes and expects to reach eminence in the medical profession, to select some one of its numerous branches and to that devote the best energies of his life.

Just so with the study of insanity; those who have devoted the best part of their lives to the work, are better

prepared to treat such cases than those of us who are engaged in general practice.

All cases should be sent to the asylum as soon as the first symptoms of insanity become well marked. The prevalent opinion, that attendance at the asylum only tends to make permanent that which may last but for a short time, is wrong. By transferring from their homes, where the delusions originated, and where the surroundings and circumstances are favorable to their continuance, breaks in and changes, as it were, the current of the mind. This is often a great step toward a cure.

Whenever you can convince a man that he is insane, when he mistrusts his sanity and comes to realize his true condition, you have then accomplished the first as well as the most important step, not only toward his cure, but in his management and conduct.

I venture the assertion that more cures are effected in a well regulated asylum than are accomplished in the domestic treatment of insanity by the generality of medical men, and am satisfied that many cases, if sent to an asylum soon enough, could be returned in a much shorter time to their friends, and so cease to become a burden to the State.

It is the poorest economy to place the insane upon the smallest possible allowance. Humanity demands, and that justly, that as they are not capable of aiding themselves, that we provide well for such unfortunates.

But humanity, as well as public economy, demands that some provision be made for furnishing good homes for those who are discharged, cured or improved, and who have no place to go to ; if not, they will be placed under influences favorable to again develop the disease, and thus are liable to be returned to become chronic incurable

cases, becoming an annual expense to the tax-payer as long as they may live.

The better to carry out the above principles, I would most respectfully recommend that provision be made whereby the Superintendent might be enabled to attend the meetings of the Superintendents of the Insane, which takes place once a year in some portion of the United States, which meetings the Superintendents of most of the leading asylums attend; also, persons from Europe. In the East, the distance is so short that Superintendents can avail themselves of so important a means of improvement to themselves, to those committed to to their care and to the State. But the expense of going from here annually is greater than most Superintendents can afford. But the State, in providing for the expenses of the trip there and back, would be at a small outlay annually, while the benefit to accrue would be of general good, and be the means of saving more than the original cost to the State.

Some arrangement should be made by which he should embody in a report to the State the information obtained each year, in such a form as to be accessible to all the medical men of the State.

Also, the State should provide means for the suitable study of this important branch of the medical profession. This could be accomplished in a very simple, inexpensive way, by making provision for furnishing the Asylum with a suitable library upon this subject, which should be free to all persons who are willing to visit the Asylum for the purpose of consulting the works therein. The cost would be but a trifle, and as each year added to a well-selected nucleus, the benefit to accrue to the State would many times repay the cost. The library would also be of

great service to the State in the trial of State cases, where the plea of insanity is set up. Tax-payers are not inclined to object to money properly expended to save expense, but have a right to object to the cost of maintaining for life persons who might have been restored to health and able not only to earn their own support, but contribute to the support of the State.

With reference to the management of the Asylum for the last two years I can find no fault.

The building is situated in a healthy locality, near enough the city to secure all its practicable benefits, without its attending disadvantages, as bad water, poor milk, impure air, inefficient drainage, sewerage, etc.

Dr. Hawthorne has added two large wards, besides enlarging two of the old ones, by extending the south wing and building on a T, and otherwise improving the place, adding many comforts, for the benefit of those committed.

I have visited the Asylum at all conceivable times without in a single case letting them know of my coming, each time going through the entire building, inspecting carefully the bedding, bath-rooms, water-closets, store-rooms, bakery, kitchen, and in fact everything connected with the care and management of the insane, and at all times have found the wards clean, bedding clean, in good order and sufficient. The bread is sweet and well made, and the kitchen is a model of cleanliness and order.

The patients are provided with good meats of all kinds. The milk is pure and rich, being furnished from cows kept on the place. Chickens and turkeys are also provided—the inmates always having a turkey dinner on the Fourth of July, Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year, as well as other times.

There being a well conducted garden attached to the place, the supply of potatoes, cabbages and other vegetables is abundant, and of the best quality. Fruit of all kinds is also grown on the place, and is provided in sufficient quantity.

All the water used about the building is obtained from a pure, never failing, abundant spring, and is distributed to all parts of the building through pipes; the provision against fire is good.

The medicines are all purchased from good and reliable houses, and I have always found them of the best quality as well as of sufficient variety to meet all the wants of the inmates.

I have at all times carefully and attentively listened to all complaints and examined into them, but am happy to state that they have always come from those insane, and proved to have resulted from the disordered mind, without the least thing to substantiate them.

I am under obligations to Dr. Hawthorne, the Superintendent, and Mr. Kenworthy, as well as to others, for the kindness and patience which they have always extended to me.

With feelings of gratitude to you for your confidence and support, I have the honor to subscribe myself,

Yours, very respectfully,

CURTIS C. STRONG,

Visiting Physician to the Asylum for the Insane.

PORTLAND, Oregon, September 1, 1876.